

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 HAVANA 00981 181728Z
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T HAVANA 0981
EXDIS
FOR ARA ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM CU UY
SUBJ: POSSIBILITY FOR POLITICAL PRISONER EXCHANGE

1. CUBAN PRESS HAS RECENTLY GIVEN EXTENSIVE PUBLICITY TO DEMANDS FOR RELEASE OF URUGUAYAN "POLITICAL PRISONER" RAUL SENDIC. WHILE WE KNOW NOTHING ABOUT MERITS OF HIS CASE, DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER DESIRABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF SEEKING RELEASE OF SENDIC AND POSSIBLY A FEW OTHER URUGUAYAN (AND/OR PARAGUAYAN OR CHILEAN) PRISONERS IN EXCHANGE FOR RELEASE OF FOUR AMERICAN CITIZEN "POLITICAL PRISONERS" STILL IMPRISONED HERE. (THE CUBANS ALLEGE THAT THE LATTER WERE CIA EMPLOYEES OR AGENTS.)

2. EXCHANGE, IF ACCEPTABLE TO RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS INVOLVED, WOULD PRESUMABLY HAVE TO BE CHARACTERIZED AS UNILATERAL, PARALLEL ACTION ON PART OF, SAY, URUGAY AND CUBA WITH US INTERMEDIARY ROLE SUBDUED OR HIDDEN. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SIMILAR EXCHANGE EFFORTS INVOLVING SOUTHERN CONE NATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE IN PAST
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IN SOVIET CASES.

3. EXCHANGE IDEA, IF FEASIBLE, HAS MERIT IN OUR VIEW BECAUSE CASTRO HAS LOCKED HIMSELF INTO PUBLIC POSITION THAT HE WILL NOT RELEASE ANYMORE US POLITICAL PRISONERS UNTIL US MAKES NEW CONCESSIONS TO HIM. GIVEN CURRENT ATMOSPHERE, THIS MAY DEFER POSSIBILITY OF RELEASE OF OUR

PRISONERS INDEFINITELY. WHILE CASTRO PRESUMABLY SEEKS EMBARGO-RELATED MOVEMENT FROM THE US, A PRISONER EXCHANGE OFFERS TEMPTING OPPORTUNITY TO HIM BOTH TO MAKE GESUTRE TOWARD LATIN AMERICAN LEFT AND TO USG. THIS COMBINATION, AT A TIME OF IMPENDING US CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS (HE IS FULLY AWARE OF CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN PRISONERS ISSUE), MIGHT SWING THE BALANCE TOWARD CONVINCING THE CUBAN LEADER TO MOVE NOW ON US POLITICAL PRISONER RELEASE.

4. OBVIOUSLY, WE ARE NOT IN POSITION FROM HAVANA TO JUDGE ATTITUDES OF SOUTHERN CONE GOVERNMENTS ON THIS MATTER, NOR TO SUGGEST MOST APPROPRIATE PRISONERS TO OFFER UP. (FYI LOLITA LEBRON AND OTHER PUERTO RICAN PRISONERS WHO FIRED SHOTS IN CONGRESS IN 1954 WOULD BE OBVIOUS CHOICES IF USG ITSELF WERE IN POSITION TO PROPOSE DIRECT PRISONER EXCHANGE. END FYI.) THEREFORE, WE WOULD WELCOME COMMENTS FROM DEPARTMENT AND ADDRESSEES ON DESIRABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF APPROACH SUGGESTED.
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